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Articles

A Matter of Life and Death in Socratic Philosophy

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In Plato's *Apology*, Socrates[1] explains to the jury why he will not abandon his philosophic mission in Athens out of a fear of death:

> For to fear death, O men, is nothing other than to believe one is wise when one is not; for it is to believe one knows what one does not know. No one knows whether death happens to be even the greatest of all goods for a person, but people fear it as if they knew it were the greatest of evils. And is this not the most disgraceful sort of ignorance, that of supposing one knows what one does not know? I, O men, in this way am perhaps also different from other people, and if I am wiser in anything it is this: that not having adequate knowledge about what is in Hades, I do not suppose I know. (29a4-b6, see also *Grg*. 522e1-2)

Yet elsewhere Socrates makes a number of critical moral judgments that suggest he actually has sufficient confidence about what happens at death to compare it favorably to a variety of other fates that can befall a human being. For example, *Crito* 47e3-5 shows that Socrates is convinced that life is not worth living for one who suffers from a worn out and ruined body;[2] and at *Gorgias* 512a2-5, he plainly implies that anyone suffering from a severe and incurable disease would be better off dead. One who is incorrigibly vicious is even worse off than one who is wracked by illness, and thus has a life that is even less worth living (*Cri*. 47e5-48a4); for such a person death is an even greater benefit than it is for the chronically and terribly ill (*Grg*. 512a5-b2). In fact, Socrates' most famous pronouncement seems to rely upon an assessment of the value of death, for if indeed 'the unexamined life is not worth living for humans' (*Ap*. 38a5-6), it appears to follow that those who lead unexamined lives would be better off dead. But how can Socrates know that anyone would be better off dead without knowing at least that death is not a great evil? In making judgments such as these, is he not guilty of 'the most disgraceful sort of ignorance', for is he not supposing he knows that death is no great evil, when in fact he has 'no adequate knowledge' of death at all?

In this paper we shall investigate Socrates' ignorance of death and show that it is not 'the most disgraceful sort', despite what seems to be implied by the other remarks he makes comparing the relative value of various lives to death. First, we shall examine what Socrates says he believes about death, and reveal the degree to which these beliefs are grounded in evidence and the nature of that evidence. Next, we shall examine his

justification for supposing that various sorts of lives are not worth living. Finally, we shall apply the conclusions of each of these examinations to the values Socrates attaches to various lives and show precisely why he believes his evaluation in each case is justified. If what we shall argue is correct, although he never claims to be wise in this all-important matter, Socrates believes there is good reason to think everyone will be better off dead.

I. Death

Only twice in Plato's early dialogues does Socrates say what he thinks death might be like. At *Apology* 39e1 and following, Socrates attempts to console those of his jurors who voted for his acquittal. Though it has now become clear that he will be executed, Socrates has become convinced that his death will be no evil, for he says 'a wonderful thing has happened': his *daimonion* (δαιμόνιον), which would surely have opposed him if what he was doing was leading him astray, has never once interrupted him the entire day. From this, Socrates feels confident that the outcome of his actions—including the sentence of death—is a good thing for him (*Ap.* 40a2-c3). Even if we suppose that Socrates' inference in this case is sound,[3] this 'great proof' (μέγα τεκμήριον—40c1), as he calls it, that his death will be no evil, does not guarantee that death in general will be no evil. If it did, our problem would be solved, for then any evil life would be a fate worse than death. But Socrates' 'great proof' only shows (at most) that Socrates' *own* death will be no evil; nothing is implied about what might be in store for other people by his *daimonion*'s silence, a fact of which Socrates is well aware.

As Socrates leaves the courtroom, he makes this final remark: 'I go to die, and you to live; but which of us goes to the better thing is clear to none but the god' (*Ap.* 42a2-5). For all he can say based on his 'great proof', his own death will not be an evil for him precisely because death is never an evil. But it may also be the case that death offers very different possibilities for different people. Thus, whatever Socrates' degree of confidence that his own death will be no evil for him, it may well be that the juror's lot in continuing to live will nevertheless be better than the lot awaiting him in death. If so, death would be at least a relative evil for his jurors,[4] since for them it would be a fate worse than life. Socrates supposes that his own death will be a boon, for he suspects that if he were to go on living his life would be a troubled one (41d3-5).[5]

But what might death hold for Socrates, and what about it allows his *daimonion* to remain silent rather than warning him away from the legal proceedings that would end in his condemnation? In speculating about this, Socrates realizes that he goes considerably beyond the evidence provided by his *daimonion*'s silence. The fact that his *daimonion* did not oppose him at any point during the trial provides no hint of what it is about death that will make it preferable to what his life would have been like. But Socrates offers his jurors 'much hope' (πολλὴ ἐλπίς—40c4; see also 41c8) by considering two possibilities about death, and showing why neither is to be feared. Either death is nothingness, like a sleep from which one never wakes (40c5-7), or it is a migration of the soul from here to another place (40c7-9). One possibility would be a 'wonderful gain' (40d1-2) for Socrates: even the Great King (of Persia) could count few of his days more pleasant that a night of dreamless sleep (40d2-e4). The other possibility would be 'an inconceivable happiness' (ἀμήχανον εὐδαιμονίας—41c3-4): if Socrates' soul is to go to another place of which the poets sometimes speak, he will be able to spend eternity con-

versing with the souls of all the great mortals now in Hades, for no one can kill him for talking with others in Hades (41c4-5).

The logic of Socrates' speculations has been faulted by a number of interpreters who find them unconvincing as arguments.[6] The alternatives he considers appear only to be the most commonly imagined ones; others surely exist. He begins by offering what appear to be the two general possibilities: when we die either our soul perishes and goes nowhere, or else it leaves here and goes somewhere else. Socrates understands the first alternative as being like endless sleep. A variety of accounts present themselves as possibilities under the second alternative—the Pythagorean conception of transmigration is but one example. Socrates considers only one of these possibilities: migration of the soul to Hades. But it is important to see that Socrates does not pretend to be offering his jurors an exhaustive analysis of the possibilities. Socrates does not say that death *can only* be one of the two things he sketches in this passage. Instead, he is trying to provide his jurors with 'much hope'. Thus, he is careful, in exploring the second option—the migration of the soul to Hades—to stipulate that the account he offers derives from 'what is said' (κατὰ τὰ λέγομενα) about death, from the stories that are typically told about it (40c7, 40e5-6, 41c7) and he is very clear in withholding judgment as to the truth of these stories (41c6-7).

This, however, is not to say that Socrates' considerations here are wholly without epistemic merit; if they were we would have to conclude that there was only rhetorical value in seeming to mull them over as Socrates does. Socrates does not and cannot know the truth about death, but he does have some ground for supposing that the gist of the stories is true. The sources of the myths about the afterlife are the poets, men who are oblivious to their lack of wisdom. But their poetry, Socrates is convinced, can be the product of divine inspiration (*Ap*. 22a8-c8; see also *Ion* 533c9-535a2). Not all poetry, to be sure, is divinely inspired; the 'greatest proof' (μέγιστον τεκμήριον—*Ion* 534d4-5) of this is the case of Tynnichos of Chalcis, who was inspired but once in a long and undistinguished career as a poet (*Ion* 534d4-535a1). But the difference between Tynnichos' inspired work and his other inventions is so patent that Socrates is convinced the god has used poor Tynnichos as a sign that the source of great poetry is divine.

Now the human sources of the best known stories about death and the afterlife are Orpheus and Musaeus, Hesiod and Homer. Because Socrates has not examined them, of course, he cannot say authoritatively that they did not understand the real meaning of their divinely inspired works. But of the poets Socrates tells his jury he has examined, although they said 'many and noble things' (πολλὰ καὶ καλά), they 'knew nothing of what they spoke' (*Ap*. 22c2-3). Perhaps part of the explanation is that the form of expression divine inspiration takes is sometimes obscure and perhaps even muddled, thus making its proper interpretation difficult. And perhaps in some cases the sheer arrogance of the poets themelves blinded them to the true meaning of what they had written. But one thing is certain: Where the ultimate source of the poetry is the god, the poetry does not lie; dishonesty is not within the god's nature (*Ap*. 21b6-7).

Although it is also plain that the poets do not speak with one voice about the afterlife, the mythology they promote does have a certain consistency. Socrates' own assessment of the possibility of migration to some other place may be particularly positive,[7] but he offers it, let us recall, as a rationale as to why his *daimonion* had assured him—by its silence—that his death would be 'something good'. In fact, Socrates' idea that

death might be a happy thing, relative to life, is not particularly unusual[8]; it is clear that the picture he offers can legitimately be said to derive from 'what is said' about death by the poets and mythographers.[9] He cannot know that the source of 'what is said' is divine, but the very extraordinariness of such tales about the afterlife might well suggest that their source was not human. And the fact that all of the most inspired poets generally agree that the soul migrates to another place in the afterlife could also be seen as evidence in favor of the divine origin of such stories. This is hardly compelling evidence, however, for surely the poets are not always right even when they generally agree on something. The poets seem generally to agree that the gods sometimes do wicked things, for example, which Socrates says he finds hard to accept (*Euthphr*. 6a6-8). But although Socrates believes he has some reason to reject stories about divine wickedness, he has no particular reason to suppose that the tales of the soul's migration are false.[10] And if they are false, it would appear the most likely alternative account is that death is like an endless sleep,[11] which, for the reasons he gives in the *Apology*, Socrates would consider no evil.

Socrates gives a strikingly similar account of death in the *Gorgias* (523a1-527a4). There, it appears that Socrates does not consider the migration story merely one of the two most likely accounts, but indeed, the account of whose truth he is convinced (*Grg*. 523a1-3, 524a8-b1, 526d3-4, 527a5-b2).[12] Dreamless sleep, a possibility mentioned in the *Apology* (40d1), while no doubt still a possibility, does not now seem to be a plausible alternative. Socrates insists that despite all his (and Gorgias' and Polus') searching, he can nowhere find any account that was better (βελτίον) and truer (ἀληθέστερον) than the one concerning migration, which he frequently associates in this passage with the most inspired of all poets, Homer (523a3, 525d7, 526d1).

In the *Apology*, Socrates says that he is convinced that 'no evil comes to a good man either in life or in death, nor does the god neglect his [the good man's] affairs' (41d1-2). The same conviction is evident in the great myth of the *Gorgias*: after death, the man who is judged to be good goes directly to the 'Isles of the Blessed' (523a7-b1, 526c1-6). Even the wicked man, whose evil is curable, is benefited through punishment (525a6-c1). Only the soul of the incurably evil man is utterly doomed. But even this one is better off, though he suffers the 'greatest, most painful, and most frightening' (525c5-6) punishments. By suffering such punishments, the incurably wicked are prevented from acting on their wickedness, and hence even in their suffering they are better off than wicked ones who are still alive and who commit their evil deeds with impunity. Moreover, by suffering these unspeakable tortures, the incurably evil souls may even do some good, for their punishments provide an example for all others (525c1-8).[13]

Socrates' belief in such stories is insufficiently justified to qualify as knowledge. His evidence is incomplete and may be interpreted in other ways. But it is the best evidence available, and given the support such stories receive from other views of which he is convinced, his acceptance of them is not irrational. The upshot of this evidence is that death is nothing to fear.

II. Bad Lives

What *is* to be feared is a life of viciousness and evil. Socrates is quite consistent in affirming this. To be vicious, Socrates insists, is to be wretched; worst of all, however, is being vicious and not having to pay penalties for doing so—being vicious and get-

ting away with it. This is so, Socrates thinks, because vice is to the soul what disease is to the body: a corruption. He also thinks that as we have reason to prize our health, so we have reason to prize virtue; in fact, Socrates is convinced that as the soul is so much more important than the body so much more should we prize virtue than health. But *why* does he think that vice is so corrosive to happiness, and why is illness?

Socrates uses the expressions 'living well' (εὖ ζῆν) 'doing well' (εὖ πράττειν), and 'happy' (εὐδαίμων) as if they were synonyms.[14] We have argued elsewhere that each of these conditions requires not only the virtuous condition of the soul, but also the capacity to engage in virtuous activities (see Brickhouse and Smith 1987). Let us consider each of these requirements.

In book one of the *Republic*, Socrates argues that the soul has the functions 'management, rule, deliberation, and life' (353d2-354a2). The good soul will perform these functions well, and the evil soul will perform them poorly—in fact, this is the reason why good souls are good and evil souls are evil. But why does the failure to perform these functions well condemn one to wretchedness?

Like all 'eudaimonists', Socrates identifies happiness as the highest good, and counts as human goods all and only those things that promote or produce happiness. For anything to qualify as a benefit, it must promote or produce something good; so it follows trivially that whatever is good is beneficial, and vice versa. If the soul is to perform its function properly, then, it must not merely manage, rule, deliberate, and live; it must do these things in such a way as to promote or produce benefits for the one to whom the soul gives life. Accordingly, the good person lives a life managed by a soul whose management brings benefit; and the evil person lives a life managed by a soul whose management brings harm.

Now Socrates is convinced that no one does evil knowingly, for to do evil is to bring harm to oneself (and others) and no one wants what he or she recognizes as harm. All evil, then, is due to some kind of ignorance.[15] The ignorant person unknowingly obstructs his or her own pursuit of goods and benefits either by misevaluating what he or she pursues as goods when they are not, or by pursuing what is really good in an unfruitful or self-defeating way. Thus, the ignorant person brings harm upon him- or herself without willing that harm. For Socrates, procuring what is harmful is wretchedness. And, as we have seen, the worst wretchedness is suffered by the one who continues to bring harms to him- or herself unimpeded by intervention and corrective punishment.

Ignorance leads us not only to evaluate activities incorrectly, but also to evaluate incorrectly our goals and the principles by which we live. So leading the unexamined life is especially dangerous because it raises the likelihood that we will not only pursue unworthy and harmful activities, but also select unworthy policies by which our activities will be governed and according to which our pursuits will be even more certain to bring us harm. One benefit of an elenctic encounter with Socrates, thus, is that one is brought to the awareness that within one's own beliefs lies (at least one) contradiction. The pursuits that flow from such contradictory beliefs obviously cannot both be fulfilling. As valuable as this awareness is, however, it is not enough; one must then determine which of one's contradictory beliefs to abandon. Socrates is often helpful in targeting the belief to give up. But only by leading the examined life may one ensure (to the extent that anyone can ensure) that the management and rule of one's life, and that one's delibera-

tions, will not be needlessly self-defeating. Pursuits governed by contradictory principles are bad enough; the proliferation of policies inimical to one's real goals is even worse. Both fates can be mitigated through the pursuit of the examined life.[16]

Vice, then, is ignorance. It is the condition of a soul that does not perform its functions of ruling and governing properly. Instead of managing one's life in beneficial ways, the evil soul leads one to do what is harmful. The way to relieve oneself of this condition of bad management is to treat the ignorance as if it were a disease, by subjecting one's principles and commitments to the 'medical' examination of the *elenchos* (ἔλεγχος), and then 'curing' one's soul of the contradictions and confusions the examination uncovers.[17]

What of the condition of one whose *body* is incurably diseased? Socrates is convinced that such a person, too, is condemned to live so badly as to make his or her life a fate worse than death. Socrates never tells us his reason for thinking this; he seems instead simply to assume it in the arguments in which it appears (*Cri.* 47e3-5, *Grg.* 512a2-b2). Perhaps Socrates has conditions in mind that involve so much direct suffering as to make the conclusion obvious.[18]

But in the *Apology*, Socrates tells his jurors of the mission by which he believes his life has been made worthwhile. The principal feature of this life is his daily examination of himself and others. So it is that, having been convicted, he refuses to offer any counter-penalty that would bring an end to his mission (37b7-38b1). In considering exile, he is particularly adamant, 'a fine life that would be for me at this advanced age', he exclaims, 'passing from city to city and always being driven out' (37d4-6). The reason he will consider none of these things, least of all voluntarily giving up philosophizing, is that he must 'talk every day about virtue. . .examining myself and others. . . [for] the unexamined life is not worth living for a human being' (38a1-6). For Socrates to have any chance at happiness, it seems, he must not only examine himself; he must examine others.[19]

Socrates never tells us how narrowly or broadly he conceives 'the examined life'. Does he mean to identify only those lives in which one 'neglects all [one's] own affairs' (*Ap.* 31b1-3), as he has, and lives only to philosophize? Or might one lead an exam ined life who, dedicated largely to other activities (farming, for example), also took care to spend regular time in philosophical discussions with others? Because he only chastises his fellow Athenians for caring more about other things than 'prudence, truth, and the soul' (29e1-2), but not for not caring at all for these most important goods (see his reference to τὰ ἄλλα ἀγαθά at 30b3-4), we believe he construes 'the examined life' fairly broadly.

One's health, then, cannot be so bad as to preclude one from leading 'the examined life'. So, because 'the unexamined life is not worth living', the life of one so badly disabled as to make one unable to lead 'the examined life' is not worth living either. And if other pursuits are necessary for a life worth living (though few, if any, seem to be so for Socrates), then one's health must be good enough to allow one to engage in those pursuits as well. The common cold, however annoying it may be, does not suffice to remove any hope one might have of leading a life worth living. Plainly, Socrates has a much graver condition in mind when he speaks of someone whose body is 'worn out and ruined' (*Cri.* 47e3-4). So mere poor health does not suffice to make one's life not worth living; only when it becomes so poor as to leave one's body 'ruined' would one be better off dead.

III. The Value of Death and the Value of Life

Disease thus need not remove all value from one's life; certainly nothing curable does so. But what about vice when it is curable? Surely some vice—that which is inadvertant—is curable, and Socrates' mission is designed to provide at least some treatment for this condition (among other things). Thus, one's life is worth living so long as one maintains the care of the soul that helps it to be free of the evil of ignorance. Of course, one's ignorance may never be cured, but it can be mitigated, as Socrates' is[20]; if not, one's life will turn out to be wasted. But the measure of the worthiness of a life is not made in considering a moment of it; so curable (or treatable) ignorance does not automatically consign one's whole life to worthlessness. It will only end up being worthless if one never (or inadequately) treats one's corrosive ignorance. And even if one's life is wholly wasted, one of Socrates' views of the afterlife—the one involving the migration of the soul to Hades—holds out some hope that a remedy can come later, so long as one's soul has not been irreparably damaged (*Grg*. 525b4-c1).

Socrates also seems to suppose, however, that some souls can become implacably and irremediably vicious. Such souls, it seems, cannot be cured of evil even in death. In the *Gorgias*, Socrates imagines that the only good they can serve is as an example to others, by 'enduring forever for their transgressions the greatest, most painful, and most fearsome sufferings', for they are past hope of benefit themselves (525c1-8). It might appear to follow from this that such people would really be better off alive than dead. But because it is far better, Socrates believes, to suffer than to do evil, and because these people will no longer be able to engage in vicious action, it follows that they will still be marginally better off dead than alive. Such souls, we may be assured, will no longer be free, in death, as they had been in life, to pursue their evil goals. And if death is like endless sleep, the dead are plainly better off than the living wicked: at least the dead do not continue to bring harm to themselves through an incorrect evaluation of what is in their interest. The dead, on this hypothesis, do not continue their evil ways; they merely sleep.

The view of the afterlife Socrates advocates in the *Gorgias* ensures that if a soul is curable, it shall be cured, and if it is incurable, it shall be put to the best use possible for it. So it follows that both curably and incurably evil souls are better off in the afterlife. Of course living the upright life is itself rewarding, according to Socrates. But his view of the afterlife expressed at the end of the *Gorgias* also ensures that at death a further reward will be bestowed on a good soul (526c1-5). Thus, a good person, too, is better off dead, even though his or her life *had been* worth living.

It might be thought that the view of the afterlife found in the *Gorgias* must represent a different view from that expressed in the *Apology*, for if the 'Socrates' whose views are expressed in the *Apology* had thought that the soul continues to exist after the death of the body, he would not have suggested 'dreamless sleep' as a real possibility. We must remember, however, first, that Socrates does not profess in the *Gorgias* to *know* what happens at death. Thus, presumably, even at the end of the *Gorgias* he regards dreamless sleep as a real possibility, although not a likely one. Second, in the *Apology*, Socrates is not trying to provide the jurors with an an exhaustive account of what happens at death; rather he seeks grounds for offering those who voted for his release 'good hope' (41c8) regarding what happens at death. Insofar as both alternatives Socrates

presents are real possibilities and are seen as such by the jurors to whom he is speaking, he can achieve his goal of creating 'good hope' by pointing out to them that on either possibility, the good man has reason to optimistic about what happens at death. Nothing requires that he try to convince them in the brief time he has left before being taken to prison that in fact migration of the soul is the *more likely* possibility.[21]

Socrates' view that everyone—regardless of the moral quality of his soul—is really better off dead is entirely consonant with a number of other traditional Greek views of the relative values of life and death, in which the suffering which pervades every person's life is relieved only at death (see n8 for references). But on Socrates' view, moral goodness makes the life of the upright person far more than a vale of tears; though he does say that few days of our lives are better than a night's dreamless sleep (*Ap.* 40c9-e2), he also equates happiness with 'living well' (see n14 for references). But death is even better than this for the good man: a 'wonderful gain' (θαυμάσιον κέρδος—*Ap.* 40d1-2), or an 'inconceivable happiness' (ἀμήχανον εὐδαιμονίας—41c3-4).

IV. Conclusion

If what we have argued is correct, Socrates believes that in some way or other, everyone will be better off dead.[22] This conclusion does not conflict with his view that certain lives are, and certain lives are not, worth living; for it does not follow from the fact that a life is worth living that the one living it will be worse off after his or her life ends. On the contrary: for Socrates, the more worth living one's life is, the more beatific one can expect one's afterlife to be. Our interpretation of what Socrates says about the values of life and death thus distinguishes between whether or not one has a life that is worth living, on the one hand, and whether or not one has a life that is worse than death. All of us have lives that are worse than what we have reason to expect in death; but some of us, if we work hard at it, will none the less have lives that are also worth living. In this sense, then, we are better off alive so long as we do what we can to make our lives worthy ones, for such a life is itself better than any other sort of life, and the rewards of having lived such a life are greater in the afterlife than the condition of one who did not lead such a life. (Socrates does not say that a curably evil soul, once cured in the afterlife, will then enjoy beatitude; he only says that it will be cured of its evil.) For Socrates, the greatest peril of all is to live a life that so corrupts one with evil that even one's afterlife is irredeemably spoiled. One's life, then, should be devoted to the care of that which continues after it—the soul. A life that follows this principle will not be lived in vain.

Finally, none of what Socrates believes is held as if it were knowledge. So although he may fairly say that he is ignorant of the afterlife, he may none the less legitimately believe he has rational grounds for judging the relative value of various lives to death. And since his assessments are, as we have seen, also based upon very traditional views about the value of death, none is taken as particularly controversial or puzzling by Socrates' interlocutors, who accordingly challenge neither Socrates' profession of ignorance on this topic nor his confident assessment that certain lives are not worth living.[23]

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NOTES

[1] By 'Socrates' in this paper, we mean the character by that name in Plato's early dialogues. We take the following to be early dialogues: *Apology*, *Crito*, *Euthyphro*, *Lysis*, *Hippias Major*, *Charmides*, *Hippias Minor*, *Ion*, *Euthydemus*, *Laches*, *Protagoras*, *Menexenus*, *Republic* i, and *Gorgias*. We believe that Plato attributes the thesis we defend in this paper to this character throughout his early period works. But we also believe that at least some of the views attributed to the 'Socrates' of middle period dialogues can legitimately be used to illuminate the doctrines developed in the early period works. However, if the use of such views is to be legitimate, they must not be incompatible with any doctrines characteristic of the early period nor can they entail middle period doctrines that are themselves incompatible with what is attributed to Socrates in the early period works.

[2] Although Socrates constructs his arguments from Crito's answers to his questions, Socrates indicates that he has endorsed this very piece of reasoning before and, hence, that he himself agrees with Crito's answers. 'I am not able to cast away the arguments I used to use, because this circumstance has befallen me; but they appear to me to be almost exactly the same as before, and I revere and honor them just as before' (*Cri.* 46b6-c1, see also: 48b3-6).

[3] For a discussion of how this inference works, see Brickhouse and Smith 1989, 237-257. We no longer hold the view we argued in Brickhouse and Smith 1986.

[4] For a discussion of how Socrates employs the conceptions of both relative and absolute evils, see Brickhouse and Smith 1987.

[5] Nowhere in the *Apology* does Socrates say what these 'troubles' (πράγματα) are. He may be referring to 'the infirmities of old age', as Xenophon would have it (see Xen. *Ap.* 6). More likely, he is referring to his 'service on behalf of the god'. (See 22a7, where Socrates refers to his examinations of others as toils [πόνοι], and Burnet's note on 41d4 in Burnet 1924, 171.)

[6] See, e.g., Armleder 1966, 46; Roochnik 1985, 212-220. For more charitable (and to our minds, more plausible) accounts, see Ehnmark 1946, 105-122; and Hoerber 1966, 92.

[7] Certainly Homer cannot be said to depict this migration as an 'inconceivable happiness'. See, e.g., *Odyssey* xi 477-503. But more positive assessments of this migration can be found, especially regarding those among the dead who were good while alive. Excellent summaries of the many varieties of ancient Greek views of the afterlife may be found in Adkins 1960, 138-139, 146; Dover 1974, 243-246, 261-267; Mikalson 1983, 74-82; Richardson 1985, 50-66; Rohde 1925, 236-242, 539-544; Rudhardt 1958, 113-126.

[8] See, e.g., Homer, *Iliad* xvii 446-447, xxiv 525-533; Archilochus 58, 67 (Diehl); Simonides of Amorgos 1, 3 (Diehl); Lysias 6.20; and esp. Herodotus i 31.

[9] See the works cited in n7, above, for citations of pertinent texts. This is not to claim that Socrates does not provide his own especially optimistic interpretation of 'what is said', but rather that his interpretation does not amount to a complete fabrication of a new myth or new myths about the afterlife.

[10] Although the *Phaedrus* is a later dialogue and thus may contain a number of doctrines that conflict with the views of the 'Socrates' of the early dialogues, what is said at 229c6-230a2 may help illuminate the view of migration of the soul in the earlier works. This passage may be cited in this connection, we believe, because, first, it does not entail anything that conflicts with the doctrines advanced in the early dialogues, and, second, it coheres perfectly with the views expressed in the early dialogues. Finally, it explains why Socrates was willing to accept mythological stories for which he found he had no (serious) contrary evidence and why he was not at all disposed to look for contrary evidence. If this is correct, the problematic cases for Socrates seem only to be those in which the gods are portrayed as immoral, petty, or mean. For further discussion of Socrates on religion and orthodoxy, see Brickhouse and Smith 1989 esp. section 3.1.5.

[11] The connection between sleep and death is as old as Homer (see, e.g. *Iliad* xiv 231, where Sleep is brother to Death, and xvi 672 and 682, where they are said to be twins. A number of ancient sources seem to count total extinction as one of the possibilities for death; see, e.g., Plato, *Phd.* 69e7-70a6; Hyperides 6.43; Democritus fr. 297 (Diels); Xenophon, *Cyr.* viii 7.19-23. The alternative Socrates seems to have in mind in comparing death to everlasting sleep, then, would also appear to have its source in tradition and ἐνδόξα, if not inspired poetry.

[12] Socrates' use of full blown myth in the *Gorgias* is striking, for mythology of this sort is more characteristic of the character 'Socrates' in the middle dialogues. However, what Socrates says in the *Gorgias* merely embellishes the only possibility for what occurs at death considered in the *Crito* (54a7-c7), and, unlike the myths of the middle dialogues, is in no way inconsistent with any of the other doctrines associated with the early dialogues.

[13] For stories involving judgment in the afterlife, see Dover 1974, 263-268; Mikalson 1983, 78-82.

[14] See *Rep*. i 354a1-2. At *Euthydemus* 278e3-279a2 Socrates uses the expression εὖ πράττειν to denote what we all desire. Later, at 280b6-7, he uses both εὖ πράττειν and εὐδαιμονεῖν as if they were interchangeable. After 280b7, Socrates exclusively uses εὐδαιμονεῖν. The exchange of these two expressions in a continuous argument shows that Socrates regards them as synonyms.

[15] For an excellent analysis of the Socratic paradox that no one does evil knowingly, see Santas 1964, 147-164.

[16] For a full account of how the ἔλεγχος achieves its various results, see Brickhouse and Smith 1991.

[17] For Socrates' comparison of the effects of philosophical discussion with those of medicine, see, e.g., *Charm*. 157a1-c6.

[18] See Lysias, fr. 73 (Thalheim). The idea that death can be a relief from suffering is also found throughout the ancient sources (see Dover 1974, 267).

[19] For an excellent discussion of just why Socrates thinks that he ought to engage himself and others in philosophy, see McPherran 1986, 541-560.

[20] In Brickhouse and Smith 1989 we contrast Socratic ignorance with the disgraceful sort of ignorance from which others suffer. Socratic ignorance—even if suffered for an entire life—does not leave its sufferer with a life worse than death, and does not entail that its sufferer is evil in any way. So it is that Socrates, however profoundly ignorant, can without reservation consider himself a good man—see *Ap*. 41d1-2, where his reassurance to the jurors that 'no evil comes to a good man' is plainly meant to apply to Socrates himself. (For further discussion, see Brickhouse and Smith [forthcoming].) Other forms of ignorance must be cured or mitigated, as we say here, to render one's life worth living.

[21] There is reason to believe that even Plato saw Socrates as holding the migration option all along to be more likely. In the *Crito*—a dialogue scholars generally agree to have been written in roughly the same period as the *Apology*—we find that 'the laws', speaking to Socrates, take it for granted that if Socrates chooses not to escape but to remain in prison, his soul 'will go away and live in Hades' and that if he chooses to escape to Thessaly, when he does eventually die, 'the laws in Hades will not receive [him] kindly' (54c6-7).

[22] Nothing in our argument, however, implies that Socrates would necessarily advocate taking the life of another or suicide, for, depending upon the particular circumstances, such acts might be unjust, and, hence, harm their agent(s). Socrates would never advocate injustice. Even the person who wrongfully takes a life will be better off in death, for as we have seen, whatever form relief from vice takes, death is a good for the vicious.

[23] We are grateful to Mark McPherran, Roslyn Weiss, and the two anonymous referees of this journal for their helpful comments on earlier drafts of this paper. It should not be assumed, however, that any of them agrees with our arguments.

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